THE
NATION

SEPTEMBER 26, 1959 . . 25c

ALASKA'S '59ers
Factory Hands in the Wilderness — *O'Carroll Colvin*

DONMANSHIP: *A Review* — *Edmund Wilson*

LIAISON FOR SURVIVAL
Science Informs the Public — *Philip Siekevitz*

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LETTERS

Good Idea—Wasted

Dear Sirs: The Nation's timely editorial, "The Munitions Probe We Haven't Had" (August 29 issue) expresses a viewpoint which I think is growing in favor with the American people, in view of the acknowledged intimacies between high level government officials and the munitions industry.

But will such an investigation (one that will truly investigate) be undertaken? I doubt it. . . . No doubt you remember the fate of Senator Wayne Morse's resolution to investigate the China Lobby; it was smothered in committee.

GUY W. FINNEY

Burbank, Calif.

In Praise of Bureaucrats

Dear Sirs: The Nation's August 1 editorial, "The Success We Don't Repeat," is meritorious except towards the end, where primary responsibility for failure to extend TVA is placed on "the bureaucrats of the old-line [civil-service] agencies, [who] will not permit the same [TVA] idea to be applied elsewhere." The power lobby is virtually exonerated.

The last twenty-five years have seen the growth, under Democratic administrations as under Republican, of a proliferation of agencies: governmental, semi-governmental, and private nonprofit, supported entirely out of taxes; and of private corporations for profit which exist wholly or virtually so on government contracts. These agencies and corporations are free of the irksome civil-service merit requirements and restrictions against discrimination and arbitrary firing on racial, political, or social grounds (in practice). One of the first of the agencies, TVA, was after all a sure thing; had it been staffed with plumbers and peddlers, it could hardly have failed.

The pay scales and operating costs of these agencies and corporations are in general much higher than in the old-line civil service agencies (*The Nation* has published some examples). A multitude of concrete instances could be cited of their relative inefficiency (see back issues of *The Nation*).

There is little doubt that the next TVA will be built and operated by a large private corporation under a cost-plus contract. The contract will be administered by an electric-corporation president loaned to the government for the purpose. He and the contractor will see to it that the cost is adequate, so that there will be no competition with existing electric rates. Adequate recreational areas will be set aside for the exclusive use of tired corporation executives.

If we poor and kicked-around but still mostly honest and competent engineering and scientific bureaucrats have actually delayed this program, then more power to us. I feel that *The Nation's* editorial could better have concluded with the suggestion that all new TVAs be 100 per cent bureaucratic.

LEE KEAN

Dayton, Ohio

Lincoln in Guatemala

Dear Sirs: I have recently returned from my vacation in Guatemala and count as one of the highlights of this trip the "discovery" of the Abraham Lincoln School at Chichicastenango, Guatemala, founded six years ago in honor of the Great Emancipator, caring for 145 boys. It is poorly equipped, has no picture of Abraham Lincoln and is in need of books, pamphlets and other material that could make this school a center for Lincolniana in Guatemala. Please direct your help to:

Director, Escuela Abraham Lincoln
Chichicastenango, Guatemala, C.A.

I. LEO FISHBEIN, M.D.

Miami, Fla.

Reality and Fantasy

Dear Sirs: The New York Times of August 27 came through with two small stories worth pondering. One described some press agents' Roman antics in the East Bronx meant to publicize "the greatest outdoor entertainment center in the history of man." The reporter spoke of a "vast wasteland . . . where, the press agents said, a $65,000,000 outdoor family entertainment center would be completed by next July 1. It will be called Freedomland, U.S.A." Like a good journeyman with the macabre touch of a Nathanael West describing a nightmare Hollywood scene, the reporter caught a whiff of what mad dogs and flacks do in the noonday sun.

The second story described the painful odyssey of two young nurses from New Jersey looking for living quarters in Manhattan, how they were short-changed by relocation agents, the goon treatment they received from wolf-pack toughs and Peeping Toms after finding an upper West Side apartment. This reporter quoted the girls as saying, "We can't take it," and told of their resolve to quit New York for their homes. . . .

Two *Times* stories in the passing parade—one a fantasy pretending reality, the other a reality beating past the dark gates of fantasy.

SID BERNARD

New York City

Wrong Lesson

Dear Sirs: You are mistaken, I think, in suggesting in your editorial of August 29, that the lesson of Laos is that "there can be no stability on China's borders until the United States recognizes Peking and is prepared to deal with it on realistic terms." It is, rather, that

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THE NATION

EDITORIALS

Honesty and National Purpose

"The critical weakness of our society," writes Walter Lippmann, "is that for the time being our people do not have great purposes which they are united in wanting to achieve." In exact synchronism, *Time* (September 21), reviewing a book by one of its own editors (Max Ways: *Beyond Survival*) sees the United States losing the cold war and finds the fault not in the policy-makers but in the American people, "because the United States has no wide-ranging sense of purpose." More arresting than the coincidence of expression is the fact that each one of us can see the essential truth of the central observation: we do indeed lack a national purpose in the Soviet sense, or perhaps in any sense except the individual will to survive as long and as pleasantly as possible. Both commentators deplore the situation. Mr. Ways ascribes it to the low state of public philosophy, which he defines as a pattern of "coherent thought connecting individual beliefs with political action." We cannot, he says, carry to the world a message that we ourselves have forgotten. Mr. Lippmann likewise feels that our influence as a world power will inevitably decline unless we regain our "sense of great purpose and of high destiny."

This may be so, but the situation may be one in which exhortation is pointless. National aims cannot be synthesized: they emerge at the appointed time from the vast flux of human desire, suffering, corruption and nobility. But if national purpose is not producible on demand, two lessons may still be learned from the discussion. One of these both Messrs. Ways and Lippmann have themselves stressed, and its importance can scarcely be overestimated: It will not do to make scapegoats of the Communists because they possess a type of unity which we lack and, in their version, don't want; in the Fascist version, we would like it as little. The other lesson is that perhaps the clamor for a "national purpose" arises from the fact that we have not meditated lately on the meaning of freedom in the American tradition.

It was Alexander Meiklejohn who pointed out in 1935 that the meaning of this country is to be found in its dedication to the idea of freedom. The special quality of this tradition is to be found in the fact that it does not insist upon, nor imply adherence to, any particular purpose, destiny or national mission. America will always mean a great many different things to a great many quite different people; but this is its strength. It will be a dark day indeed when the "meaning" of America can be summed up in a slogan that would look handsome and read well when emblazoned on the cover of *Time* or that would appeal to USIA functionaries as a salable item. We have always been able to muster the strength we needed to meet the great crises of the past largely because we have refused to give way to the perennially stated demand for universal acquiescence in some ephemeral "national mission"—one usually defined and proposed by somebody with an ax to grind.

Decision-Making at a Low Level

Was the decision to upset the delicate balance of power which the 1954 Geneva agreement had achieved in Laos made by the President and the Secretary of State? Or do we have in Laos, as Senator Mike Mansfield suggests, "a policy based on Executive agency accommodation, with the Defense Department, the CIA, the ICA, or whatever, each putting in an oar and the State Department trying to guide the boat while it does not really have the power to control the rudder"? It is passing strange that such large commitments—some of which have admittedly been indiscreet and provocative—should have been made in an area where, as we are now told, both the Air Force and the Army are strongly opposed to intervention. Military planners, reports Brig. Gen. Thomas R. Phillips in the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, "foresee that any assistance that can be effective, other than air transport, will require the use of atomic bombs to burn off the jungle and to make a desert along the lines of invasion across the frontier. In the process, as many as 100 harmless peasants might be killed for each guerrilla put out of action."

Senator Mansfield, therefore, is talking only the most obvious good sense when he warns of the danger of permitting critically important decisions to be made "on a relatively low Executive level." In Laos, the decision-making was low level not only on the Executive scale,

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but on the quality scale as well. A correspondent reports to *The New York Times* that despite extensive American aid since 1955, the only evident change in Vientiane is the number of luxury cars cruising the three unpaved, filthy main streets. The Laotian capital has neither harbor nor railway, and is the one capital city in the world with no water system, no sewage-disposal system and no garbage collection. Cocktails cost $2 and the city's two plush night clubs import dance bands from Manila and hostesses from Bangkok, Singapore and Hong Kong. With the upper-crust Laotians, and presumably with their advisers, first things come first.

"Unity" Is Not the Answer

Four years after unification, the American labor movement is faced with serious internal tension. Fundamental differences in point of view on both domestic and foreign issues between the Meany and Reuther elements — differences which unification merely concealed — have once again come to the surface. "United" in its determination to war endlessly against corrupt unions, the AFL-CIO is now faced with the reluctance of the ousted I.L.A. locals in New York to rejoin it. James Hoffa states that the Teamsters would reject an invitation to rejoin the federation so long as George Meany is its president. "Unity" has not enabled the AFL-CIO to organize the South or to block anti-labor legislation in Washington. In a word, labor is learning that it is not always true that there is strength in unity; it all depends on the kind of unity.

The Democratic Party has also been discovering the limitations of "unity." With comfortable majorities in both Houses, the Democrats acquiesced in the "unity" imposed by Messrs. Johnson and Rayburn and have wound up with a miserable legislative record. At the outset, Senators Proxmire, Clark and Morse warned that an imposed unity could produce disastrous results; their warnings went unheeded. Liberal Democrats, induced to mark time on civil rights until the end of the session, now find themselves in the unhappy position of having to explain to their constituents how a Congress controlled by Democrats could pass an anti-labor bill with only two dissenting votes in the Senate — yet failed to pass new civil-rights legislation. "Unity" on the alleged need for a "mild labor reform bill" resulted in the passage of a modified Landrum-Griffin bill which the International Association of Machinists promptly dubbed the Kennedy-Landrum bill. Mr. Truman, unmindful of his own experience in 1948, urged his fellow Democrats at the Midwest Conference in Kansas City to "unite," but a violent intraparty fight ended with the walk-out of certain delegates and the formation of a rival organization. Carmine De Sapio has suffered a major tactical defeat in New York, but in its wake Mayor Wagner calls, not for the ouster of De Sapio, but for "unity." In San Francisco, George Meany blames Speaker Rayburn for passage of the Landrum-Griffin bill and announces that labor must abandon the notion that Democrats are necessarily friends of labor. In New York, Louis Hollander, chairman of the state AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education, rebukes the Democrats and praises Governor Rockefeller and Senators Javits and Keating.

"Unity" is an elusive social concept. A dictated unity is meaningless; unless based on consensus, it will not usually survive the first hard blow. Nor is "disunity," if it implies an honest attempt to air real differences, necessarily harmful. President Roosevelt did not lose the 1940 election despite his attempt to "purge" certain Dixiecrats in 1938. President Truman told off the Dixiecrats and won a stunning victory in 1948.

In the case of both labor and the Democrats, the barometric readings are similar and the forecast much the same. Labor has not been routed nor have the Democrats been defeated, but the gathering clouds are a warning of defeats to come unless the notion of "harmony for harmony's sake" is quickly abandoned. Both labor and Democrats are suffering today, not so much from "disunity" as from a lack of dynamic objectives which would compel broad grass-roots support.

What Khrushchev Mustn't Miss

Since every loyal American cherishes some facet of American life which, if viewed by the visitor from the Kremlin, will infallibly convert him to the free-enterprise system, we wish to make our nomination. It is not the Girl Scouts, Cape Canaveral, hybrid corn or Miss America, although for all these things and persons we have the highest regard. Our nomination is the horse. Of course, Nikita can see a horse, or horses, when he goes back where he came from and the *National Review*, the Hungarians, and other guardians of the Republic, cease from troubling him; but our reference is to that special breed of horse which runs around a track with a price on its head. A magnificent arena, dedicated to the welfare and improvement of this noble animal, was recently dedicated at Ozone Park, Queens, New York. Its name is the New (capital N) Aqueduct race track; it cost $33 million, and on the opening day 42,473 fans wagered $3,430,765; how much was wagered illegally even the police don't know. This emporium occupies 203 acres of valuable Queens real estate and will hold 80,000 followers of the so-called sport of kings, now fully democratized in the land of free enterprise. The opening was attended by Governor Rockefeller, Mayor Wagner and former Governor Harriman, among countless other celebrities. Color guards from Floyd Bennett Air Field, the Marine Recruiting Station in New York, the First Army Base at Fort Jay and the Mitchel Air Force Base lent patriotic tone.

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Aqueduct is, of course, only one source from which the State of New York has derived over $500 million since pari-mutuel betting was inaugurated in 1940. Whether the horse gallops with a jockey on his back, or trots ahead of a sulky and driver, racing and betting form a perennially prosperous duo. In his race with the United States, Mr. K. should not fail to see, admire and love the American race horse. Until he does, all his threats to catch up with us are an idle boast.

Decisions in Ignorance

In this issue (see page 164), Philip Siekevitz tells of the exceedingly important and timely work of the New York Scientists' Committee for Radiation Information. It may be added that not only is the ordinary citizen in need of information on those aspects of science and technology which will decide his fate and the fate of his children, but high-level decisions are often made with little information as to the ultimate consequences. Clement Attlee, writing in the London *Observer*, cites an important case from his own experience. He was aware, during World War II, of the atomic project; he knew, that is, that the aim was to make some sort of super-bomb ahead of the Germans, and consequently steps had to be taken to sabotage the Norwegian heavy-water installation which had been taken over by the Germans. But that was all he knew. "I knew nothing whatever about the genetic effects of an atomic explosion," Lord Attlee writes. "I knew nothing about fallout and all the rest of what emerged after Hiroshima." Did Mr. Truman and Mr. Stimson give much weight to these aspects when they decided to use the bomb? Did they even know about them? Did the scientists impart to them such information as they then had? Lord Attlee thinks not: "As far as I know," he states, "President Truman, Sir Winston Churchill and Sir John Anderson, manager of the British project, knew nothing of these things." At this moment decisions may be in the making with equal lack of prescience. In this technological age, there cannot be too much of the kind of activity which the Scientists' Committee has undertaken, and it is needed as badly in Washington as in New York.

Not Insured

A nuclear exclusion clause has recently been added to floater insurance policies. It reads: "This company shall not be liable for loss by nuclear reaction or nuclear radiation or radioactive contamination, all whether controlled or uncontrolled, and whether such a loss be direct or indirect, proximate or remote, or be in whole or in part caused by, contributed to, or aggravated by the peril(s) insured against in this policy; however, subject to the foregoing and all provisions of this policy, direct loss by fire resulting from nuclear reaction or nuclear radiation or radioactive contamination is insured against by this policy." The company might, that is, replace your property if it is ignited by a nuclear blast and burns up (provided the company is still solvent), but if the article is ruined as a result of concussions caused by a nuclear explosion, that's your hard luck. Now suppose you are at home when disaster strikes. In Wisconsin, at least, you are out of luck again, if you are still alive, that is. The Blue Shield Plan of the State Medical Society of Wisconsin states among its general exclusions, "services required because of any injury, sickness or disease caused by atomic or thermonuclear explosion, or radiation resulting therefrom, or any type of military action whether friendly or hostile." In these matters everyone is on his own. Nothing could symbolize more graphically the breakdown of the social mechanisms by which individuals are protected, at least financially, against the vicissitudes of life. The irony of it is that this particular peril is wholly man-made, wholly artificial, yet it transcends the perils of unassisted nature.

Out of Your Kitchen Burner

Most people think of helium as the gas which should have been used in the dirigible *Hindenburg*, but wasn't. It has more immediate virtues. Because it resists liquefaction at low temperatures, it is an invaluable adjunct in certain fields of technology. As a coolant, it keeps liquid the hydrogen and oxygen used as missile fuels; and in the same capacity, it may make possible miniaturization of machines — computers, electrical equipment — at unimaginable savings in power and space. What is more, helium is one of the few valuable resources of which — so far as known — this country has a monopoly; 99 per cent of the world's supply is derived from the natural gases found within 250 miles of Amarillo, Texas.

The government now has five extraction plants sitting astride the pipelines leading from the gas fields. But these plants together extract no more than 20 per cent of the yield. So 80 per cent of the world's supply of helium is now escaping into the atmosphere, mainly through kitchen gas ranges and industrial furnaces. At this rate, the Amarillo fields will have run out of the gas by 1980.

The Department of the Interior has been asking Congress for a half-billion dollars with which to build storage facilities sufficient to assure this country enough helium until the year 2,000. But neither Congress nor the Administration paid any attention to the request. The reason? Perhaps it is our federal legislators' traditional dislike for doing anything which smacks of conservation, or their equally traditional reluctance to spend a dollar which will yield a profit, not to private enterprise, but merely to the people.

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LIAISON FOR SURVIVAL . . *by Philip Siekevitz*

FOR ABOUT a year a group of New York scientists, aware of public interest in radiation problems and the political issues involved, made themselves available to laymen as speakers throughout the metropolitan area. The arrangement was informal — too informal, in fact, to meet the demands of a public whose hunger for information proved unexpectedly intense and widespread. A few months ago, therefore, the scientists organized themselves into The Scientists' Committee for Radiation Information, with plans afoot for incorporation, an office, an executive secretary, and the publication on a regular basis of an information bulletin.

At this writing, the committee consists of about twelve active members, most of them from the Rockefeller Institute in New York City, plus a score more from all over the city who are gradually being drawn into active participation. The "activists" are already speaking to laymen's groups at least once a week, sometimes twice, in response to eager requests which are constantly increasing. Liaison has been established with a somewhat similar organization in St. Louis, the Committee on Nuclear Information [see *The Nation*, June 13, 1959] and soundings are being taken with the aim of founding similar bodies elsewhere in the country.

The existence of the New York and St. Louis committees, and the response to them, point up of course the sad lack of public information on a vital subject. In this regard, the government clearly abdicated its responsibility, especially for the first ten or twelve years of the postwar period. During that time, only government scientists working in government laboratories were studying radiation and its effects; and, given the platitudes of the cold war, the restricting effects of government bureaucracy, the power wielded in their time by Senator McCarthy and Admiral Strauss, it was not surprising that private knowledge of this aspect of public affairs was practically impossible to come by.

Today, the situation has changed. It isn't only that the curtain of official secrecy has been lifted somewhat (the AEC publishes the results of much of its work, even if quite late at times); mainly it is because quite a large number of laboratories other than "official" ones are working on, and publishing articles about, various aspects of radiation. The truth is that information now is not too difficult to obtain, if one knows where to look and can understand the scientific jargon.

So it comes about that most of the members of the New York Scientists' Committee for Radiation Information are not radiation "experts," but merely scientists who know how to obtain scientific publications which are not easily available to the general public, and who by their training are qualified to evaluate the material contained therein. Rather than radiation "experts," they regard themselves as middlemen between the scientists who do the work and the public upon whom, sooner or later, the results of the work will impinge. The members of the committee regard this task as much a part of their duties as that of experimental laboratory work. More and more scientists are coming to be swayed by this viewpoint — a good omen, I believe, for the future of our technological society.

THERE IS another aspect of this ingathering and handing out of information which is not so fortunate. Most of the official pronouncements on radiation coming out of Washington these days are in the form of "briefings" by men who have been delegated to the job by government. And since all governments have an official policy, these briefings are not always unbiased explanations of the results of scientific experiments, but are usually colored — by distortion or omission — to make the results fit the policy. This situation is to be expected, but unfortunately the public does not understand that government spokesmen, whether or not they are scientists, are not expounding scientific results, but are parroting official policy.

Thus, members of the New York scientists' committee, and other similar information bodies, have another role — that of correcting not the results of government laboratory work, nor the scientific conclusions drawn from them, but the notion that the results are necessarily identical with the political interpretations which are often almost flippantly derived from them. The task is not made easier by the feeling that many of the interpretations are deliberate distortions which are particularly serious in the case of radiation information because they affect the lives of countless human beings.

Now, these distortions make scientists angry, but they make the general public only confused. Audiences addressed by members of the New York committee consist of many diverse groups: PTA bodies, SANE (Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy) gatherings, church and women's clubs, even some business groups like the Kiwanis and Lions. At such gatherings, the same questions always come up: "Who is right, Teller or Pauling?" "Why does X, the government scientist, say this, and Y, that other scientist, say that?" In most cases, the conflict arises not on matters of fact, but in their interpretation: whether, for instance, a couple of hundred thousand deaths in a world population of nearly three billion represent something important or unimportant in the total scheme of things. For all scientists involved in the radiation problem agree, more or less, on the experimental observations; it is the nuances that are different. No matter what government spokesmen imply, there is no such thing as safe radiation; the effects are all bad. The problem reduces itself to this: how much hazard should the citizen be

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forced to accept in this insecure world? And I think that the chief source of audience anxiety lies in this question: who should decide what should be the size of the hazard? It should be emphasized that this is an ethical question, to be answered in a democracy by democratic procedures, and not a question to be left to official scientism.

THE PEOPLE who come to the lectures do so for several fundamental reasons. Some come from fear — fear of an uncertain, insecure future for their children. Some come out of a conviction that their government has not given them all the information available. Some come because of a regular psychologist's handbag of anxieties. But most come, I think, because of their interest in radiation information. They realize that sooner or later, perhaps within their own lifetime and certainly within that of their children, a new form of energy will predominate in the world, an energy which we all know can be put to good and bad use.

Of course, these audiences are not a cross section of the American public, but they are certainly a cross section of the politically conscious and the political doers. And one gets the impression that many in these audiences are somewhat ashamed of their naïveté about radiation, that they want to rid themselves of the anxieties which spring from ignorance and that, consciously or unconsciously, they blame the government for not having kept them informed on these particularly important matters. The very fact that they have to attend lectures under private, rather than government, auspices would seem to them proof enough of government disinterest in their knowledge and opinions.

The inevitable question at the end of these information sessions is: "What can we do about it?" What is meant by this question is not primarily, "How can we put a stop to nuclear bomb testing?" (though, of course, this is the intent of some questioners, and secondary, at least, in the minds of others). What these people want to know is, how can they voice their opinions, whatever the opinions may be. "How can we get

the information necessary to forming opinions?" they ask. The technological world has been bolting merrily along, without a murmur of dissent, and suddenly here is the atom bomb, here is strontium-90 in fallout, and the heart is seized with anguish. Are the people fools? No, for this is *their* government at the reins in a new revolution and, by rights, the government should grant them a voice in deciding the direction the revolution should take.

Everywhere that the group has lectured, it has been met by resentment at the government because they, the people, have been held to have been uninterested in being informed and, even if interested, incapable of grasping knowledge. Why? Because the public are not experts.

And this is the nub of the matter: the thought that "experts" are running everything. I think that the vital, overwhelming interest that the audiences have in atomic energy and all its manifestations is but the reflection of a faith that democratic procedures are not doomed because one needs to be an "expert" to understand any of the many complicated facets of modern communal life. The people resent the notion that "there are experts and there is the laity," that there are no longer individual citizens, but a mass, a mob; that the government, because it has recruited "experts," is hence alone "in the know" — and inviolate.

Thus the major premise of such groups as the Scientists' Committee for Radiation Information is not the imparting of knowledge concerning atomic energy, but a kindling of the belief that in a democracy the people can still obtain the necessary technical information to run their own affairs, and that the "experts," far from always being right, sometimes know less what is good for the people than do the people themselves. The promise is that eventually Americans will learn that they can get to know enough to instruct their Congressmen in atomic-energy affairs, and indeed in all the technical problems of our society, and that Congressmen need not forever be led to the execution platform by experts who have axes to grind.

THE audiences know that democracy dies with increasing disuse; tyranny feeds on every decision that is not made by the representatives of the people. Integration in the public schools should not be left to the Supreme Court; every legislature should settle the matter on its books. The uses of radioactivity, whether for peacetime purposes or for testing of the nuclear bomb, should be left not to the AEC, but to Congress.

The educating of the citizenry is a big order for scientists' information committees. Yet, remembering the Fabians and the workers of England, something might come out of it; perhaps these committees are the core of a Fabian Society of a new revolution. And there is another reason which ought to spur scientists on in their efforts. If some holocaust should occur, it would be the scientists who would be damned. Scientists are racing against time in order — among other reasons — to save themselves from being hanged.

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FACTORY HANDS IN THE WILDERNESS

ALASKA'S '59ers . . *by O'Carroll Colvin*

Palmer, Alaska

THE REMAINING bands of Michigan's Fifty-niners — whose treks last spring to "a homesteaders' heaven in Alaska" reportedly represent the wish-fulfillment of millions of over-mechanized Americans — now find themselves in a situation less like heaven than hell.

Of the first nineteen families who started out starry-eyed, and duly enshrined by the nation's press, television and radio, only six are still together, precariously perched on land they have staked and uncertain whether they can stick it through the winter. The second caravan of twenty families, with forty-two children among them, has split into feuding groups, living in rented trailer camps and cabins and planning to look for jobs or return to Detroit as soon as their joint fund of cash is accounted for.

Their dream of creating a self-sustaining farm community, an Alaskan paradise free of the competition and time-clock tensions of city and factory life, has ended in failure for several reasons. Sadly enough, some of the Fifty-niners will tell you the failure is partly due to the very evils they fled from.

"The break-up of our group began before we were a day on the road," said Floyd Miller, a young welder in the second caravan. "Speed was one of the things we wanted to get away from — but all the way up here half the guys were hittin' and honkin' behind the other half of us, tryin' to make us speed up. Every night at our meetings they were gripin' and bellyachin' and name callin' because we weren't gettin' here *fast*. And four of the guys kept tryin' to take over from our leader. Competition all over again."

His wife nodded assent. "Kind farmers in Canada offered us eggs at 15c a dozen. Some of our people grabbed all of them, leaving none for the ones who didn't get there first. The same old rat race!"

Like most in the second caravan, Miller and his wife, a drill-press operator, had quit their jobs and sold all they owned for their stake. With four other families, traveling in trucks or cars with trailers, they had ended up in this camp site in the Matanuska Valley, fifty-five miles north of Anchorage. "I went up with other men here to Willow, where another group from our caravan is camped," Miller said. "We heard there's plenty of open farm land there. We tramped around in the brush for ten miles but there's no timber there for our cabins. Then some of us went up — across that godawful river — to see if we'd join the Fifty-niners in the first group homesteading in the Susitna Valley. But without a bridge across that mile of boiling currents and shifting sandbars — well, none of us want to go there."

Miller said he would look for a welding job in Palmer — twelve miles away from his present camp site — where he could rent a house for $100 a month. "At least our child could go to school there. Homestead on my own? I don't know a thing about farming — and all I'd have to take into the woods would be my guns and fishing gear and chain saw."

A carpenter and his sick wife and three children were hunched over a bare wood table in the cabin next door. "This is crazy," he said. "We're heading back just as soon as I find out what, if any, I can get back from my $525 — the amount each family put into our equipment fund. Where the land and timber are available, it isn't just privation you face. Without roads or communications, it's a question of your family's survival."

The Nation's editors asked O'Carroll Colvin of the Anchorage, Alaska Daily Times, to report on the thirty-nine Michigan families that last spring sought to establish new homes in Alaska. Her manuscript was accompanied by the following letter.

Palmer, Alaska
September 2

Dear Sir: On August 10, I gave the original of the enclosed piece to John Corey, the school teacher at the Indian village down the lake, to mail for me from Homer, over on Cook Inlet. There's daily air-mail connection from Homer to Anchorage and I wanted to get it to you sooner. Today, on my neighbor's radio, I heard that Corey's body had been washed up on the shores of Cook Inlet. . . . I've no idea whether he ever made it to Homer, whether you have had this piece for weeks now.

There's been no mail or other plane in here for two weeks of flood rains and wind storms, which have only begun to subside today. If the week's mail plane can get in here on floats, and if a boat can make it up to the post office, from which I'm now marooned, this will get out tomorrow.

After five days and nights of unceasing rain, our river has turned into a churning Niagara. Ripping out thousands of eight-foot spruce trees and barrel-sized boulders like matchsticks, it swept away the steel-cabled extension bridge that was my link to the air strip and to the post office six miles away. . . . The water behind me has been rising until it is now a foot from the back of my cabin, and the lake in front is three feet away.

But the rain seems to have slacked off since last night. If it hasn't, or if the wind should swing to the west and batter the big, drowned trees against my thirty-year-old, sagging cabin, I'm set to get away. I'll head for the high land half a mile back with the one-armed trapper and his family whose home is marooned with mine. His canoe is tied to a tree at his back door with sleeping bags, tent, cook stove and grub ready. If we have to go, I'll take this with me.

If you get this carbon copy by Friday, September 11, you'll know that I haven't had to, and that this little crisis is over.

O'Carroll Colvin

Editor's Note: *The original, "hard" copy of Miss Colvin's manuscript was never received. The carbon copy, with its attached letter, reached our office on Friday, September 11.*

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His wife paused, stacking the supper plates. "We're lucky we didn't sell our house back home — only rented it a year for $85 a month. That's $5 less than we're paying for *this*," she said, looking at the sagging beds, the single light bulb, the water supply in two pails carried from a nearby tavern. "Back home we have six rooms, contemporary ranch style, with wall-to-wall carpeting, rose bushes and landscaping, the school bus a block away."

The families gathered outside in the sunshine, the children spreading out to play. The men looked over at two battered old trucks loaded with rusted tractors, sawmills, power generators and farm machinery bought secondhand with money from their common fund. "Maybe we can sell that junk and split what we get for it," one of them said. "At least three fathers — one with seven children — haven't the money to get home."

FORTY miles away, near Talkeetna, in a big box the clergyman-electrician whom the group called "the deacon" had fashioned for living space on the back of his truck, he and his family clustered around a bench holding a gas-powered lamp and a shallow tray containing a dime-store turtle and a six-inch plastic palm tree. "I guess I'll have to get out my tools and go look for work in Anchorage," the deacon said. "I guess only a group inspired by a shared religion and sharing *all* their earthly goods can succeed in this kind of a venture."

"We didn't think it would be anything like this," his wife whispered fiercely. "No roads where we could homestead in a group, no school to get to. *Our child must not miss this year of school.* But God led us here and He will show us the way." This last sentiment was repeated.

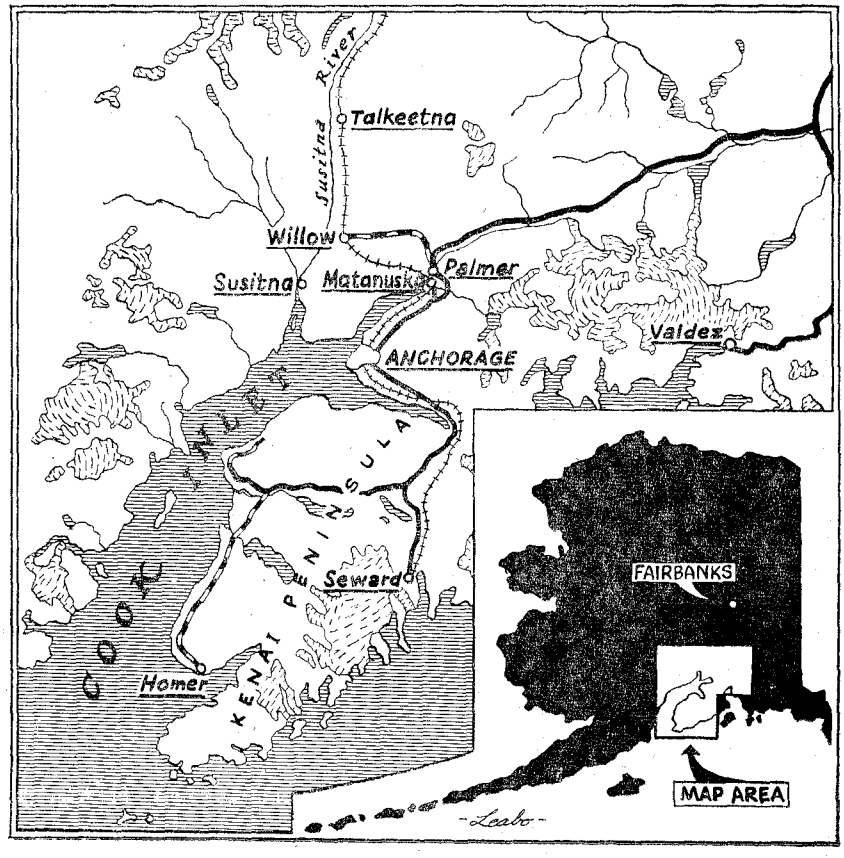
"The way" for the six Fifty-niner families actually attempting to homestead together has been unguided and unaided. It remains beset by ignorance, isolation, poverty, geography and bears.

Wrecks, breakdowns and dissension had marked their snow-clogged 4,600 mile route last March when, with thirteen other families, they reached the Kenai Peninsula. The center of Alaska's current oil explorations, now spreading 250 miles south of Anchorage, this was the area chosen by their advance scout and they found it much as he said it was. "Like an indescribably beautiful painting unrolling against a backdrop of cloud-capped mountains, whispering prairie grass and abundant timber, with a good climate and streams full of salmon ready to leap into your frying pan." But to their consternation they also found what he neglected to tell them: not a single block of its good farm land, near a road and big enough for ten to twenty homesteads, was not already filed on.

They also learned that it costs $150 to $350 per acre to clear land in Alaska, that its few hundred farmers face extremely tough competition from giant outside shippers, that loans to beginning farmers are almost non-existent, that even newly cleared tracts must be heavily fertilized from the first year, that short summers endanger many crops and make others impracticable, that heavy snows and harsh cold preclude winter ranging of cattle, that adjusting to the primitive conditions of homesteading in the wilderness is hardest of all on city dwellers accustomed to even the simplest amenities.

These were some of the reasons they discovered, during three confused weeks on the Kenai, why only a tiny fraction of Alaska's homesteaded lands are farmed, why at last count over half were unoccupied or abandoned, why some tracts have been filed on as many as seven times.

The cruel truth sundered the nineteen families. Some set back for Michigan, some searched for jobs, three filed on separate homesteads on the Kenai. But the six remaining families — with not a farmer among them — resolved to make a try together despite the calamitous handicaps. After expensive air trips to other prospective areas, they decided on the Susitna Valley. To reach it they had to drive back to Anchorage and, at a cost of another $500, load their three trailers, two trucks, one car and one jeep onto Alaska Railroad flatcars and travel north 112 miles to Talkeetna. This, their last link to the outside world, is a moribund village of one hundred whose general store offers fresh milk



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(shipped in once a week) at 50c a quart, frozen chicken at $1 a pound and gasoline at 75c a gallon.

Unloading their equipment in Talkeetna's mud and slush, the little band had to haul it through the village and across a mile-wide expanse of rotting ice where three rivers meet at the village edge. One of the women described the frantic ordeal: "The men worked day and night for four days, trying to get everything — the drums of oil and gas, the tents, the livestock, the thousands of pounds of food and gear across while the ice still held. We women tramped back and forth carrying cartons of stuff in the snow and ice. We were wet up to our hips and scared stiff. On the fourth day, before we got the third trailer over, the ice broke. One boy fell in but we fished him out safe from the freezing water." The end of the journey was six miles further — down a desolate, narrow, snow-choked road, where the white wilderness swallowed up these nineteen men, women and children.

FOR TWO months their tent and trailer homes remained on the road while the men ripped out seventy-foot spruce and birch trees and attacked the chest-high undergrowth to make the first clearings. ("The only patch of sky we could see was the little strip over that lane.")

By August each clearing, about a hundred feet square, was still a hapless chaos. Trees lay where they had crashed akimbo between gaping craters, and the reddish earth was ripped into twisted ridges. Stumps and their roots uptilted six feet in the sky in jagged balls of soil, and great mounds of gravel and clay, hauled up in buckets by rope and pulley, were piled where wells were being dug by hand. Some wells were down thirty-two feet without reaching water. The men had not yet succeeded in erecting cabins for themselves, much less a shelter for their livestock, or even outhouses. What a frontiersman could do with ease in a day took these city men a week or two by laborious trial and error. Framed by the dark, dense forest and the raw clearings bogged in mud, the huddles of family possessions looked naked, exposed, pathetic. The eye met bedsprings and mattresses, clothes wringers, wash tubs, water barrels, rugs, record albums, cartons of canned goods, of flour, coffee and sugar, of books and bathroom tiles, drums of oil and gasoline, tanks of propane gas, suit cases, tools, bicycles and broken umbrellas.

On Gerry Donaldson's clearing (Donaldson said he quit his job with the Detroit bus system after nineteen years, when the company changed its retirement time from twenty-five years of service to the age of sixty) a small truck garden showed modest promise. Standing in a drizzle of rain, Mrs. Donaldson was feeding wood to a massive and curlicued stove, bought secondhand en route, which stood on planks over the mud near their trailer. In her wide-brimmed white straw hat veiled in black net — cut from her petticoat to shield her from mosquitoes — she made an insouciant figure as she baked biscuits and fried salmon while the rain bounced off the stove top. Inside the trailer, freshly ironed pillow slips — pressed with a stove-heated iron — and wild flowers on the table betokened her high spirits despite each day's new problems.

That day's problem was a goat belonging to a fellow settler. Its eye had been gouged out by the horn of a heifer. Peroxide had been poured into the wound, but no one knew if this was the right treatment. Probably too late to save it, they learned next day that it wasn't.

Also imperiled that weekend was a cow belonging to another family. While the young mother washed diapers in tubs rigged on a mud-swamped platform — in water which Donaldson had trucked in barrels from a creek eight miles distant — her husband described the sick cow's symptoms. The next day Donaldson drove twenty-eight miles to seek the advice of an old-time homesteader who has befriended the newcomers. "That cow has mastitis — probably had it when he bought her last week — and if it's not taken care of right, like I'm tellin' you, her milk will dry up," the old sourdough told him. "Look, I'm tellin' you fellahs all I know — for your own good and the good of this country," he went on. "Now you say you want to get a horse to pack out moose for the hunters this fall. Know anything about horses? Know the first thing to do when you look at one?"

"No," said Donaldson uneasily.

"The first thing you do is lift its tail. If the horse slaps it down quick and hard, you know it's a young one. Now, you take its teeth —" Donaldson looked more and more worried as the old-timer tried to initiate him into the expertise of the horse trader.

Driving back to his clearing, Donaldson stopped for a look at a few acres of oats the Fifty-niners are sharecropping. Unless the weather holds up for the harvest, Donaldson said, the owners of the three cows, four heifers, two goats and thirteen chickens among them couldn't afford to buy winter feed for these animals. Potatoes on part of the two more sharecropped acres were doing well, but most of the other vegetables were choking to death because of crowded planting.

In the first three months, three disasters had been avoided. When a gravely ill child had to be gotten to the Anchorage hospital, a prearranged emergency-signal of dynamite blasts had brought the boatman from Talkeetna. (From there the boy was flown by bush pilot.) When a trailer and perhaps the valley were threatened by a brush fire lit by a greenhorn, everyone came running in time to quell it. When bears twice ripped up one tent home, by good fortune its tenants were absent.

Even if such luck holds and their buildings are up before winter hits, the men are worried about finding jobs to help carry them. The stakes they had counted on to last a year wouldn't, at Alaska's prices. Residents of less than a year are not eligible for welfare aid.

LIKE THE prospective homesteaders who came with them, most of these men are skilled factory and construction workers. But even in the construction trades they have virtually no chance of using their skills here this year. A statewide carpenters' strike which began June 27 and stretched into September paralyzed the short building season. As construction — mostly military

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— is Alaska's number one industry, the halving of its estimated $85,000,000 payroll this year is a body blow to all business. With a population of 60,000 to 70,000, Anchorage and its environs can probably provide jobs of some sort for the Fifty-niners, but if most of some 7,000 applicants who filed on land in the year ending July 1 are newcomers who will look for jobs here this winter (no statistics are available on their status), the prospect is a grim one.

THE NEW state already faces very serious problems in helping its jobless this winter. By July 1, when normally the unemployed are fewest, the number covered by the state's insurance program had increased by about 20 per cent over the same period the previous year. The Anchorage office alone accounted for a total of 2,261, which was 607 more than the same period in 1957. With the fishing season expected to yield little more than half of last year's disastrous returns, with furs, lumber and mining in the doldrums (mining last year dropped 30 per cent from its 1957 figure), Alaska's people foresee a winter of hardship.

An economic survey published last February by the Seattle First National Bank closed with the flat statement: "The last thing Alaska needs at the moment is more people."

Alaskans themselves seem to be on the horns of a dilemma on this question. They know they need new settlers by the thousands to create a prosperous state, but this means creating thousands of new jobs to support them. They know that even if there is a major oil strike, oil production itself will not create many jobs. And though the Japanese have taken some first steps, there is no evidence that big investors are rushing in to exploit the great potentials in hydroelectric power, in bottom fishing, in iron ore, perhaps, and in pulp and timber. Until they do, and until roads link Alaska's million or more acres of agricultural land to thriving markets, prospective homesteaders would do well to ponder these words of farm officials: "By the time land is cleared, a home and barn built and animals and equipment acquired, a homesteader in Alaska may have to put $65,000 and ten to twenty years of hard labor in his undersized tract of 160 acres."

Today there is no evidence that the state or federal government is forming new land-development policies to replace those which are sowing hardship and heartbreak.

My Crusade Against Fraternities . . *by Wade Thompson*

> "Frat" is a contraction that is no longer in good usage. It is correct only in connection with Greek-letter high school and non-collegiate societies and then only as an expression of contempt. — *From the Pledge Manual of a great national fraternity.*

TO ANYONE who has better things to do than to poke his nose into the idiocies of educational institutions, this account of fraternities and their frailties may seem like a sour fantasy—something spun out of the morbid brain of a disgruntled college professor who has nothing better to do than to play with words and distort facts. I can only promise the unbeliever that I record every word with gruesome sobriety, with malice toward none and strict justice and charity toward all. Motivated solely by a sense of wonderment at human behavior, I bring to the task a ponderous, porous and pedantic mind, through which I have squashed all facts, statistics and quotations in the best scholarly manner. (To preserve objectivity and strict impartiality, the terms "frat" and "fraternity" are herein used indiscriminately, with no pejorative connotations put upon either word.)

I was drawn abruptly to my scholarly duty toward fraternities the other day when I accidentally stumbled over an issue of the *National Interfraternity Conference Yearbook* —in this case, a record of the forty-eighth annual meeting of all social fraternities. This particular meeting was exceptional in that it was blessed by a wild kick-off from Dr. Ralph W. Sockman, a noted New York pastor. Dr. Sockman obviously knows his way around a pulpit, and I'll bet he has scared the living hell out of more people than Norman Vincent Peale can ever boast of. His address to the forty-eighth National Interfraternity Conference proved to be a real masterpiece, a positive symphony of high sentiment. Starting with a tender, pleasant pianissimo, he gradually and gracefully introduced a few contrapuntal themes, smoothly crescendoed to a grand climax, and ended with a smashing major key resolution. I have time to replay only a few climactic bars of Dr. Sockman's composition:

> America is showing something superior to the Kremlin at the moment. . . .
>
> We are the style-setters morally for the world. That is not boasting. It is just humble recognition. We are.
>
> These great college fraternities—sixty-one of them in this group—are style-setters under God for the world at large. . . .

Now men of the cloth are of huge heart and prodigious faith, but sometimes their very goodness disqualifies them to speak on certain subjects which they clearly wot not of. It behooves men of crasser and meaner composition to straighten them out occasionally, lest they inadvertently turn their ministerial cannon in defense of some other worthless cause. It is in this spirit that I point out to Dr. Sockman that a frat boy wouldn't know what a moral style-setter was if one came up and goosed him. "These great college fraternities," as Dr. Sockman calls them,

WADE THOMPSON, whose "My Crusade Against Football" (The Nation, April 11, 1959) was anyway a succes d'estème, teaches literature at Brown University.

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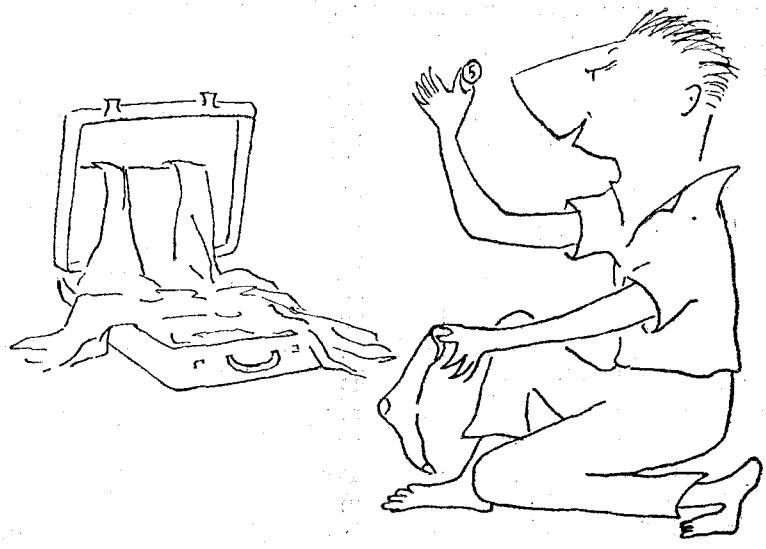

Arline Willar

"I love him for drawing out into the light all the belongings that no one else has looked for far enough to find. . . ."

are the silliest, stupidest institutions invented since the intussusception of the chastity belt. They have no more moral "style" than a collection of Mafia gangsters, D.A.R. girls, Army generals or ladies of joy.

WHEN A young man is chosen to enter a frat, he is known as a frat-pledge, and he must pass through a period of pledgeship—roughly corresponding to an apprenticeship period for knights or bricklayers. As a frat-pledge, he is expected to undergo certain trials and to learn certain lessons, for which purpose he is given a *Pledge Manual*. The lessons he learns are three in number: (1) *Sentiment*—or how to love his brother; (2) *Smoothness*—or how to conduct himself; and (3) *Ritual* — or how to perpetuate the old frat.

So far as Sentiment is concerned, I cannot do better than to quote from a *Pledge Manual* of one of our most famous fraternities. (There is no point in getting this stuff second-hand.) On page 76 appear detailed instructions on how a frat-boy feels toward his brother:

> I love you not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you.
>
> I love you not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are making of me.
>
> I love you because you have done more than my creed could have done to make me good, and more than any fate could have done to make me happy.

I interrupt this tender lyric to assure the reader, who may have become confused at this point, that this is brother-to-brother sentiment, and not advice on how to seduce a maid or woo a wife. I go on, and now the rhetoric really begins to steam:

> I love you for the part of me that you bring out. *(Part not specified.)*
>
> I love you for putting your hand into my heaped-up heart and passing over all the foolish and frivolous and weak things that you can't help dimly seeing there, and for drawing out into the light all the beautiful, radiant belongings that no one else had looked far enough to find.

I turn off the steam here to assure the reader that I am not treacherously divulging sweet sentimentalities in contempt of an understandable request for privacy. On page 94 we learn that the frat-boy is urged to let his "Mom" and "Dad" read his manual, so that they too can appreciate the nobility of feeling and smashing tenderness of regard which frat-boys harbor toward each other. If Mom and Dad can stand this, so can we.

One more taste of the joy-juice:

> I love you because you are helping me to make of the lumber of my life not a tavern, but a temple, and of the words of my every day not a reproach, but a song.
>
> I love you for closing your ears to the discords in me, and for adding to the music in me by worshipful listening.

Boy, oh boy! That is sentiment like mother used to bake. Actually there is more, but the rest of it is, I'm afraid, just a pinch too much even for Dad or Mom.

AFTER THE frat-pledge has been dunked sufficiently in this vat of Sentiment, he must steel himself—it takes courage to join this outfit—to endure a lesson in Smoothness. Smoothness is a quality so devoutly to be desired that no fewer than forty-six brilliant metaphors are expertly mixed, amid incantations and mutterings, to insure its miraculous conception.

As the heavens are high above the earth, so is God above His subjects, and so am I far above any feeling of contempt for a frat-pledge who volunteers to be smoothed up. Like a rough and uncouth diamond, the brave boy must be chipped and sanded and polished before he can submit to be worn on his lady's finger. Fully 47 per cent of the *Pledge Manual* is devoted to a detailed description of the process. Time is limited, however, so I shall deal in the next paragraph with only one of the milder forms of smoothing—the Dinner.

The unassailable Saint George himself, during the great dragon-carnage of 744 A.D., could not have felt more trepidation at the prospect of battle than the modern frat-pledge must feel as he scrubs his face and lips in preparation for Dinner at the Frat House. The manual warns him that "the dining table is the Waterloo for those *who don't know*" — a terrifying proposition surely and one not calculated to allay the tensions and fears of the frat-pledge. Like a knight-fledgling in King Arthur's Court, he is instructed with hair-raising minuteness on the strategy of the diurnal battle of Waterloo: "The spoon must be held somewhat the same as a pencil, but at a different angle, of course, the handle passing between the first two fingers, and the thum [sic] resting on the upper side." And even if he gets his thum-*sic* firmly on the upper side, he now has the grim task of transporting the victuals while at the same time engaging in Conversation. ("Conversation at the table should be in a moderate tone and should be

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confined to agreeable and reasonably refined subjects. . . . Discussion of women should not be indulged in at the table.") But even if he leaves out women, he must know that many a mess has been made between the platter and the palate, and that one drop of a pea could mean the loss of the entire battle.

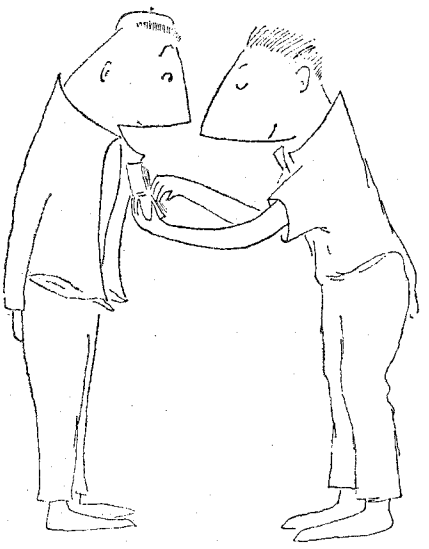
But let us suppose he wins the battle; he now has to learn his Ritual, most of which is so fantastic that it would put to shame the master of ceremonies of a Polynesian fertility rite. I personally was once privileged to witness a full-scale, nationally organized, recondite and highly esoteric ceremony — done up with full scenery, costumes, tears, nobility and appropriate moanings — so I know whereof I speak. I shall spare the reader any details: suffice it to say that the whole thing was excruciating; every last word, every last gesture, was drawn out, tortured and buried publicly to the unutterable misery of everyone present, so there is no point in trying to reproduce the affair on paper. Besides, all present had been enjoined to keep it secret (I can easily see why). It went on for two hours and fourteen ghastly minutes.

Beware of an organization that has to douse itself constantly in ritual and high nobility. Any enterprise worth its weight in salt can be shot heavenward with just a couple of ripping prayers and a handshake or two. It's the lame-brain outfits that traffic in high mumbo-jumbo and creep through their existence with the vitality of a snail: the D.A.R., the American Legion, the Society for the Admiration of Charlie Wilson. All such collections of dolts require enough ceremony to bore the archangels — as well as the cherubims, seraphims and ordinary angels — and enough nobility to bore Ralph W. Sockman himself.

WHY DO fraternities exist? Their demerits are so numerous, their shortcomings so short: they codify snobbery, they pervert values, they corrupt decent instincts. They eat on exclusiveness, they thrive on intolerance, they presume to stratify peoples and beliefs, they gorge on stupidity and inanity, and they disgorge heartache and viciousness. What amazing secret do they possess?

One popular myth has it that they have some remote relation to scholarship — that they actually promote it. This is so foolish as scarcely to warrant comment. Even deans and frat-boys know better. Any frat that can keep its scholastic average even close to the average of non-frat students for as long as six months is so rare that it can confidently expect to be pelted with plaques and trophies, and people will stand around and marvel at it.

No, the answer lies elsewhere, and if I may be pardoned for momentarily departing from stringent objectivity, I offer my own speculations.



Arline Willar

"I love him for putting his hand into my heaped-up heart. . . ."

A true education is a harrowing experience. A student who wants to be educated must be courageous indeed. He must expect all his comforts and illusions and complacencies to be ruthlessly ripped away. He must drink the cup of humility to its last lees and dregs. He must have the courage of a man about to sit in an electric chair; he must be prepared to watch his toenails curl and his flesh sizzle. In one sense, this is a lonely ordeal. Not that he can't communicate his experience—he can, of course — but he can't delegate it. He must feel it himself. The experience is intensely personal and individual, charged with pain and thrills, with glory and terror.

Not many people can stand this experience. Even fewer, I'm sure, want it. But the danger that it will happen to a few students is always present, so long as there are good teachers and good books lurking about. Frats offer the student an easy protection against electrocution. There is safety in a group, particularly if the group is identified and surrounded by inanity. The group says, in effect, let us all stick together and nothing much will happen to any of us. And nothing very much does.

I KNOW whereof I speak, for I myself have tasted the divine nectar of fraternal brotherhood. It happened at the University of Chicago, shortly after the last war. At that time the entire university was infested by intellectuals and would-be intellectuals — with the result that frats were finding it mighty rough weather indeed. Frat chapter after frat chapter was forced to fold its tent like the Arabs and as silently sneak away for lack of patrons. The few that did manage to survive did so primarily because they offered a place to live—and places to live were then hard to come by. The result was that these frats found themselves occupied by the most unlikely and unfraternal brothers in creation — most of whom, like myself, had just been released from the armed services, and had had our fill of stratified idiocy. I confess the impurity of our motives, but I will say we gave the old frats every chance to endure, if only they had been endurable. At least I can speak for the one I belonged to. We even went through the ritual as prescribed — a minor duplication of the ritual I described earlier — although I admit we speeded it up considerably. Indeed we got so good at ripping through it, that we reduced the time to two minutes and fourteen seconds, and I am convinced we could have cracked the two-minute barrier if only we could have gotten over that lumber-temple-tavern business without faltering.

Now it so happened that the headquarters of the national fraternity were in downtown Chicago, and the permanent cadre of the frat were mighty suspicious of us. Once we took in two Jewish boys, and they swooped down upon us and gave us a terrifying sermon on the dangers of

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"mongrelization." Then one day one of the national brothers spotted a couple of Negroes in the house—and that did it. Brotherhood had gone too far, and the whole intention of this great moral style-setter was being subverted. The chapter was abruptly and unceremoniously closed, the house sold and the heretics were perforce scattered far and wide.

I mention this incident for two reasons — one personal and the other philosophical-historical. Philosophically-historically, the incident simply hasn't been recognized — even Alfred McClung Lee in his *Fraternities Without Brotherhood* (Beacon Press, 1955) does not mention the matter — possibly he didn't even know about it.

Personally, I was not on the scene when the climactic bit of anti-mongrelization took place, but I submitted a letter of protest to the Awful Powers, and announced my resignation. This seemed to me the only fraternal thing to do. A couple of days later I received, to my utter astonishment, a reply from the national headquarters to the effect that my request to resign was completely out of order, and that I should consult Section 7 of Article XV of the fraternity constitution before writing any more letters of protest. I consulted the vital section, and literally rubbed my eyes to see that "no member can voluntarily sever his connection" with the organization. The whole force of the revelation hit me. *You can't get out!* Like joining a penitentiary — you stay in till they put you out.

For seven years now I have been enduring, waiting, suffering — but always hoping, hoping, hoping that my misconduct will be heinous enough to warrant expulsion. If this article serves to reduce my sentence by even one day, it will have been worth the writing—if not the reading.

Show Business Is All Business . . *by Richard Hammer*

ON THE FACE of it, it would almost seem that the Broadway Theatre has never been in better health, economically at least. With the number of new plays arriving each year pretty well stabilized over the past decade at about seventy (compared with 260 thirty years ago), and with the number of theatres holding at thirty-two (against eighty only twenty years ago), box office receipts and audiences have been mounting. During the 1958-1959 season, in fact, 11,720,000 theatregoers paid more than $40,150,000 to see seventy-one Broadway dramas, comedies and musicals — an audience increase of 863,000 and a box office boost of $3,000,000 over the 1957-1958 season. What's more, for the first time in the history of the theatre, last year saw weeks in which more than $1,000,000 passed into the till — and not one such week, but eight.

This is the outward face of prosperity; behind it lies the inner face of trouble. For, despite the record audiences and gross, the season as a whole ended up $500,000 in the red. And, as usual, five out of every six shows were financial flops (the percentage of artistic failures was even higher). Costs of everything continued, and still continue, to mount. To bring a straight drama to a Broadway house now involves an outlay of $100,000 or more (three times as much as twenty years ago, twice as much as ten years ago), while the cost of producing a musical may run to the astronomical total of $350,000 to $400,000. Merely to keep pace with operating expenses, without doing anything at all toward paying off the original investment, a straight play must gross $20,000 or more every week at the box office. This means, in terms of audiences, 60 per cent to 70 per cent of capacity at every performance, with the entire orchestra floor sold. The needs of a musical are even greater. Little wonder, then, that only smash hits last for more than a few weeks and that few producers take a chance on anything new or with a potentially limited audience.

In some cases, certainly, there are legitimate reasons for increased costs: the salaries of supporting and minor actors have at last reached a livable level, as have those of backstage personnel. The costs of materials — scenery, lighting, costumes, advertising and the like — have gone up not only in the theatre, but all over. But where some cost rises have been inevitable, and even desirable, others are in a different category. Theatre owners, with several plays competing for each of their houses, now demand a larger share of the receipts, higher guarantees against losses, and sometimes even reductions in their share of such expenses as stagehands, advertising and the like. The stagehands' unions, watching the decline in the number of playhouses and the resultant contraction in available jobs, have demanded, and gotten, regulations establishing a minimum number of jobs for each theatre and carefully limiting the functions of each worker. And because these are strictly minimum regulations, a show which has a higher budget or a larger cast is required to hire more stagehands — even if the additional men have nothing to do but sit backstage and play poker.

Designers, lighting men, costumers and other technically creative people, working toward what they call "perfection," demand the best possible materials, regardless of budgets. The experience of one producer in this respect is particularly illuminating. Just before starting work on a new play, he had spent the summer watching a Connecticut neighbor build a new home at a cost of $25,000. At the theatre, that fall, his set designer asked for $40,000 to put up an impressionistic frame house on the stage. "Would it be cheaper,"

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the producer finally asked in desperation, "if we installed real plumbing?"

As long as everyone else is getting theirs, the stars and the playwrights are not to be denied. Top stars can now command a base salary of $2,000 or more a week against a percentage of the gross. In some cases, this brings their weekly income to $7,000 or more — a high price to pay for talent on any terms. And the authors, long the forsaken men, have at last come into their own, largely through the intervention of their agents. Not only do authors draw their legitimately handsome royalties, but they now have gained a veto right over stars, cast, directors and other aspects of the production. While not too important to the authors themselves, this power gives the big agents a hold which is clearly apparent.

THE MAN on the spot, then, is the man trying to put on the show: the producer. While meeting the demands of stars, the theatre owner and the unions, he must also try to protect his investment and that of his angels (still relatively easy to find). The easiest way for him to meet these financial pressures is to increase the price of tickets and deal with people who will buy them in huge lots. Thus, musicals this season will have a top of $9.90, while seats for straight plays will cost up to $7.50. At these rates, almost everyone except the expense-account boys and the theatre parties is priced right out of the audience.

That ubiquitous institution, the theatre party, has come to the rescue of many a producer in the last couple of years. With its aid, he can come into New York with an advance sale of $500,000 to $1,000,000 or more, knowing that he's going to run for a good, long time and very probably turn a profit — or, at least, break even.

Arrangements for the theatre parties — there are thousands every year and the number is growing — are handled by any one of twelve different theatre-party agents, who get 6½ per cent of the price of each ticket. In some ways, these parties make it easier for a producer; in others, more difficult. If the producer has something the agents think will sell, then he's all set; they will work to get as many organizations as possible interested, and sell as many tickets as they can. But if the agents think the producer has a lemon, or a show which won't interest their clients, they will sit on their hands. (The tickets they handle, of course, go to organizations which in turn sell them at high premiums, which are tax deductible. Thus, the audience brought in by the agents don't generally go to the theatre because it is the theatre: they go because the $25 or $50 they pay over the ticket price make it a tax-deductible evening.)

The power of the party agents is obvious. With their control over vast audiences, they can break or make a show by their recommendation or lack of it. Only recently theatres were forced to call off a plan to experiment with an early, 7:30 P.M., curtain on Wednesday nights because agents had already booked 120-odd parties for these midweek nights.

UNDER all of these pressures — mounting costs which mean higher ticket prices which mean reliance on theatre parties and expense-account crowds — the New York theatre, at least on Broadway (and increasingly off-Broadway, too), is losing its real audience. A love for the theatre is something that is built early in life and lasts a lifetime. But today, the newly-married young people, the kids out of college, just cannot afford to go. This potential audience doesn't exist any more; and the steady, every-week theatregoer has become a thing of the past.

With producers reluctant to take a chance on anything but pure entertainment, the vitality that was once New York theatre is gone. The effect is sometimes as baleful upon the critics as upon the theatre. Nowadays when an occasional producer does show a spark of vitality by putting on something even a little off-beat, critics are inclined to praise him. In their desperate attempt to save the theatre for the theatre, the critics, too, along with everyone else, seem to have lost their critical judgment. Seriousness alone is not enough for a play; there must be artistic merit as well. The theatre isn't going to be saved by praising its every valiant failure.

What becomes obvious about the Broadway theatrical scene is that art and economics have become one and indissoluble. In order to try to make money, the producers produce only what they think the majority want. Even the serious drama is generally only pseudo-serious, but since it is "different," it is greeted with praise, may make some money (which Shakespeare rarely does), and presents a general impression that things are returning to greatness. But the impression is only fleeting. The total impression of the theatre in the United States today is of gloss and polish and technical finesse; of an art form without art; of a vital aspect of life without vitality.

LETTERS

(Continued from inside cover)

there can be no stability there—or in a number of other places—unless the United States keeps out, instead of trying to impose unpopular governments on other peoples.

I would recall, in this connection, that the Geneva Conference of 1954, which was the only international conference since the end of World War II which achieved a positive, and generally satisfactory, result, was one in which China participated, without being recognized by the United States, and at which the United States was represented only by an observer. In his speech as chairman of the closing session of that conference, Mr. Eden remarked: "The agreements concluded today could not, in the nature of things, give complete satisfaction to everyone, but they have reduced international tension at a point of instant danger to world peace. All will now depend upon the spirit in which they are observed and carried out."

The present troubles in Laos would not have arisen unless the Royal Laotian Government had committed grave infringements of the Geneva Agreements, and of their supplement, the Vientiane Agreement, notably in relation to democratic rights and freedom for its citizens, and had been encouraged, if not actually inspired, in this policy by the United States. . . .

E. P. YOUNG

London, England.

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Donmanship

SUPERMANSHIP, or How to Continue to Stay Top Without Actually Falling Apart. By Stephen Potter. Random House. 128 pp. $3.

Edmund Wilson

IT IS astonishing that Stephen Potter should have been able to sustain this joke so long. *Supermanship,* the fourth volume of the series that began with *Gamesmanship,* is in no respect inferior to the others. It begins with a report on the progress of the Lifemanship Correspondence College of One-Upness and Gameslifemastery. The college has now a new building, "actually smaller" but "infinitely more modern," which "partly derives from the Chapel of the Secondary School at Ausverfleischenhültz." There have also been changes in personnel. G. Odoreida, whose "unethical" practices had always presented a problem, was, it seems, dropped four years ago, and has started a spurious school of his own. On the other hand, three new members have been added to the Lifemanship staff. C. Sticking has a "primary attack," "extraordinarily difficult to counter," which mainly consists of a laugh, "big and Falstaffian, blowing away cobwebs," "a happy guilt-free laugh — 'gloriously sane,' little Effie Weeks called it." He was able to remain "top man" for fourteen months till deposed by the Lawrenceman, who is "small, pale, intent, serious, with rather large plastic features in a small face, and a big dark beard, round and soft and soggy." They never knew whether he had actually read Lawrence (D. H.), but he had somehow picked up from him a formidable method. It was found that he could stop Sticking dead in his tracks by shifting the conversation to a level where one found oneself groping with primitive symbols and profound psychological insights. Both, however, were put to rout by J. Cannery — who seems to combine something of Angus Wilson with something of John Betjeman. Cannery was invariably delighted with everything that was said and done because — a specialist in the history of lift styles — he was a connoisseur in the ideas and architecture of the middle class day-before-yesterday. If Sticking said, "Progress...," for example, the Lawrenceman would say, "In what sense?" But Cannery would block them with, "It's dead right for period." What is so good in these books of Potter's is the brevity and compactness of the presentation. As in any practical manual, the principles are stated and concisely illustrated. Nothing goes on too long.

This opening section is followed by discussions of the Lifemanship of Babies; "How to be good at the piano without being able to play much really"; "How to be Top Christmas"; Reviewmanship; Carmanship; and the ploys and counterploys in use among lecturers and chairmen. The chairman, to undermine the lecturer, may have little notes sent him from the audience and reply with distracting signals; or, in sitting down after his introduction, cross his legs in such a way as to reveal that his right sock does not extend much above the shoe, thus diverting the attention of the audience to "this large white naked ankle." The lecturer may resort to the Distinction gambit by waiting till the house is quiet and "taking one small tablet out of a green glass bottle from which a very long tail of cotton-wool has to be pulled before the tablet will come out, and then be stuffed back after," thus suggesting that he is "plucky to be there at all" and that it is only the burning spirit that gives him the strength "to raise the chalk to the blackboard." There is, also, a ploy-by-ploy guide to the ways in which Supertown and Supercountry may score off each other when playing host.

I HAD supposed that the kind of covert dueling which Potter has been satirizing —though of course it goes on everywhere —was a phenomenon that, in this virulent form, was particularly characteristic of English life in the period since the last war—in which a fierce competition of pretenses has been stimulated by the recent lapsing of actual prestige and wealth. But a rereading of Thackeray's *Book of Snobs* has shown me that this habit is of very long standing. The fakery of Supercountry, as well as other themes of Potter's, appears here in more pompous and brutal terms. Of the pretenses that are satirized by Thackeray, winemanship survives in Potter; but in Potter's more impoverished and less feudal world, there can hardly be any question of having the grocer brought in to play butler.

THERE IS one aspect of Potter's subject which I have been looking to see him deal with but which he has so far unaccountably neglected: one-upmanship in academic circles. This seems strange in view of the fact that Stephen Potter began as a scholar and must know the academic life. It is to be hoped that he will eventually deal with it; but, in the meantime, since he has not done so, I should like to add here a few notes that I have collected in this department. The commonest and most primitive kind of competition that goes on among American professors is to top one another in reading. I was once told of a conversation between Irving Babbitt and someone else of equal competence in the field of romantic literature which soon reduced itself entirely to an exchange of the titles of books. In this game, the opponent is supposed to show by a brief appropriate comment that he has read the book named by the other. Of course it is easy to cheat if one's opponent does not press one too far. One may know something *about* the book without having actually read it, and so risk a non-committal response that cannot be too wide of the mark. But if the question is cleverly put and searchingly followed up, it may reduce the opponent to a confession of ignorance. One of the high scores is driving one's opponent — this is quite difficult to do — to a confession that he has not only not read the book but has not even heard of it. The highest points of all — and I have heard of this happening at Harvard — are scored by inventing a non-existent book and getting the other man to pretend he has read it. The most reliable way, I should say from my own experience, for the non-academic person to counter a well-equipped scholar, who has scrutinized and read more than he has, is to cut in with some opinion, offhandedly and freely expressed, which is quite outside the scholar's gambits and will cause him to gasp and sulk. I discovered this, entirely without malice, through a series of incidents in conversing with professors. In talking to the late Tucker Brooke at the time he was working on Marlowe, I referred to T. S. Eliot's theory that *The Jew of Malta* was meant to be comic. It turned out that Eliot on Marlowe was completely out of bounds. When, later, I had been reading John Ford, I expressed to another Elizabethan

EDMUND WILSON's Apologies to the Iroquois *will be published in January by Farrar, Straus & Cudahy.*

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expert what seemed to me the harmless opinion that Ford, when he strove to be fancy and fine, was imitating the late Shakespeare. This elicited the sharp rejoinder that this had never been said by anyone, that no statement of any such opinion could be found in the literature of the subject. I now exploit these shock tactics deliberately.

But all this is crude enough work in comparison with the refinements of one-upmanship which are practiced in the English universities. A book can be banished from the conversation by saying, "Oh, do you really?" and changing the subject. John Strachey has an excellent story of meeting in the street at Cambridge, in his undergraduate days, his older cousin Lytton, to whom he expressed his enthusiasm for Freud. Lytton soon put an end to this by saying simply "Does that interest you?" There is also the more piquant method of behaving in such a way as to suggest that the author in question is a pariah for reasons too vile to mention. Either ploy is effective in preventing one's opponent from knowing whether the author has been read or not. There is also the more commonplace trick of concealing one's ignorance of, say, Wells's novels by admiring his scientific fantasies (which one may well not have read either) or of Shaw's plays by praising his dramatic criticism.

But the feats I admire most are the Oxford-Cambridge devices for remaining inexpugnably on top of one's subject. I used to be told that the approved procedure was to go on being known all one's life as an authority on some subject without ever publishing anything. You were supposed to know so much about it that no one dared to bring it up in your presence. Then you died, leaving nothing but notes, which you had bequeathed to some other scholar, who would never do anything with them. But I believe that this quiet method is now rather out of date. Instead they have a marvelous new double ploy. You work a long time on some aspect of, say, Milton, of whom — to the consternation of people who think highly of him and are eager to hear about him — you speak with utter contempt: "A randy old Puritan who hated women"; or of Voltaire: "A professional cad." But then when your book appears, it turns out that you have treated your subject with deep reverence and perfect discretion. You have thus scored smartly twice: first by shocking people, then — after the shock has worn off — by doing what they hadn't expected.

Compulsion and Creation

NEUROTIC DISTORTION OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS. By Lawrence S. Kubie. University of Kansas Press. 151 pp. $3.

George Dangerfield

"I KNOW well what such men are," said Trollope's Theodore Bolton in *The Claverings* — he was talking of Cambridge dons — "and I know the evil that is done to them by the cramming they endure. They learn many names of things — high-sounding names, and they come to understand a great deal about words. It is a knowledge that requires no experience and very little real thought. But it demands much memory; and when they have loaded themselves in this way, they think that they are instructed in all things. After all, what can they do that is of real use to mankind? What can they create?"

One would hardly go to Theodore Bolton, or for that matter to Anthony Trollope, for subtle insights into contemporary dilemmas. Yet here they seem to be saying that erudition is not wisdom, that the merely erudite can be immature, and that repetitive disciplines are not creative. As a man who had a miserable education at two great English public schools, Trollope could have added — if the idea had been available to him — that repetitive disciplines have an unhappy similarity to neurotic processes. He could have, but surely he wouldn't have. Considering those mechanical work habits on which he prided himself, and the endless drowsy repetitions which he dearly loved and which seem to drug his genius, one can only suppose that the old boy would have rejected the idea as unmanly. Yet on his own confession he was deeply and permanently wounded by his experiences at home and in the school.

Dr. Kubie's remarkable little book put me in mind of Trollope because Trollope's *Autobiography* begins with the destructive influences of education; and Dr. Kubie's book ends, as it should, with education — with the suggestion that education so far in our history has had a tendency to proscribe self-knowledge, to encourage immaturity, and to dam rather than to release the immense creative potential of the human race. This suggestion (it is hardly more than that) rises inevitably from the two fundamental propositions in his book. The first is that the creative and the neurotic processes are universal, "because both arise in early childhood, not out of exceptional circumstances but out of simple and ubiquitous human experiences." The second is that these two processes "are intertwined but mortal enemies," and that there is no truth whatsoever in "the ancient cliché . . . the culturally noxious assumption . . . that one must be sick to be creative."

How ancient the cliché is may be a matter of argument. I should have thought that it could not be found before the nineteenth century; that it is essentially Romantic. Of its endurance into this post-Romantic era there may be less doubt. Out of a long experience, Dr. Kubie maintains that many psychologically ailing artists, writers, musicians and scientists refuse therapy from a fear that "in losing illness they will lose not only their much prized 'individuality,' but also their creative zeal and spark." In short, it is somehow not their creativity that matters; the neurosis, rather, has become unique. And yet, in reality, the neurosis (Kubie says) is the most banal and undistinguished component of human nature.

IT IS a little hard to accept this, partly because the symbolic language of neurosis is apt to appear rich, complex and inventive; and partly because it is difficult to discard the belief that there is something *usable* in neurosis. We are certainly able, in theory at least, to accept the idea that it is quite wrong to try to define an artist in terms of his neurosis; but we may still feel, if neurosis is universal, that his *relation* to his neurosis is what counts. If he can picture it or objectify it in some way so as to make it accessible to others, has it not then served a creative purpose?

Dr. Kubie agrees that to "express our own illness is not merely a privilege: it is a supreme duty, a calling, and a destiny." But he would add that we can hardly express our illness, our profound contemporary concern with the neurotic in human nature, unless we have some less confused idea of what neurosis is. To describe it as a conflict between the ego and the destructive forces within the psyche is to give it a heroic quality which Dr. Kubie, if I understand him, denies that it ever has.

He says that normal and psychopathological behavior differ in this way: normal behavior is susceptible to freedom of choice and of response; in neurotic behavior "the processes that set it in mo-

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tion *predetermine its automatic repetition*, and this irrespective of the social or personal consequences of the act." The more behavior approaches the normal, the more flexible it is; the more neurotic it is, the more rigid and repetitive it becomes.

The construct of the Mind, then, as Dr. Kubie sees it, is such that neurotic processes never work *for*, but invariably *against* creative-inventive processes. It is such that illness always and everywhere blocks and corrupts invention. He describes our mental processes in terms of a symbolic spectrum. One end of this spectrum is dominated by the Conscious, where the mental processes are anchored to reality "by their precise and literal relationships to specific perceptual and conceptual units." The other end is dominated by the Unconscious, which is anchored to unreality because it contains only memory traces of past unresolved conflicts, and because its symbols, when they present themselves to conscious inspection, both portray *and disguise* the conflict they are concerned with. The intermediate space is dominated by the Preconscious, which is the source of creativity.

THE Preconscious is not a term original with Kubie. Freud, for example, recognized it as one part of the tripartite Mind. But Kubie gives it a far greater emphasis and, indeed, assigns it an entirely new role in the release of the creative potential of the human race. In his interpretation, the Preconscious is a psychological system, concurrent with the other two, whose function it is: "To make free use of analogy and allegory, superimposing dissimilar ingredients into new perceptual and conceptual patterns, thus reshuffling experience to achieve that fantastic degree of condensation without which creativity in any field . . . would be impossible." The Preconscious is *cogitation*, in the special sense of *co-agitare*, "to shake together"; the Conscious is *intelligence*, in the special sense of *interlegere*, "to select from among." The Preconscious is capable of thinking, indeed cannot help but think, more than one thought at a time; the Conscious, to achieve clarity in communication, which is its purpose, must think one thought after another. The first is analogical and incredibly swift; the second is logical, and relatively very slow.

To be healthy, therefore, implies a flexible interplay between the Preconscious and the Conscious; to be unhealthy implies that the mind is dominated by the rigid and distorting rule of the Unconscious, or the somewhat less but too literal influence of the Conscious. I realize what damage I am doing to Dr. Kubie's ideas by these over-simplifications. But it would be fair to say that, although they are the result of close observation and long practice and of the study of a mass of clinical data, they are still in the realm of diagnosis rather than of cure; that they are more hypothetical than practical.

In any event, they awake in the reader — or at least awoke in this reader —some of the apprehensions they would wish to dispel. Dr. Kubie says, for example:

> The influence of this [unconscious] rigidity can be observed in the stereotyped repetitiousness of form and content in the works of the musician, of the artist, of the writer, and of the scientist. How often is it said that a man has painted the same painting over and over again, told the same story, composed the same music, ground the same scientific ax? *Were it not for this fact, it would be impossible for the specialist in the arts to recognize a man's paintings from their technique and content, or his music without having to be told who the composer was.* [The italics are mine.] It is the artist's unconscious which leaves a personal signature on his work as on his handwriting; and like a fingerprint left by a thief in the night, it it unmodifiable and therefore *noncreative*. . . . All this is the price we pay whenever unconscious processes hold the upper hand. . . .

Does he not here point, after all, to a vital relationship between neurotic processes and the artist's "personal signature," his visible creative identity, that which distinguishes him from other artists? If this is so, then I should certainly hesitate, if I were an artist, before I asked for therapy.

Elsewhere he says: "Occasionally one encounters a man or a child whose preconscious learning processes, through some happy accident, operate freely. He learns effortlessly. . . . Yet because he has done this with Seven League Boots, and at the speed of all preconscious processes and without laboring through all the intermediate steps, he is unable to explain to anyone else how he has done it. Nor can he teach." But suppose that it was not a happy accident: suppose that education, heeding Dr. Kubie's criticism of it, succeeded in making preconscious processes available in a way that is not possible today. What then would be the state of communication, if one could neither explain nor teach?

But the private mind like the body politic, when it meets with some new concept, is apt to prepare the stake and the faggots. Nothing is safer than to be left in error. Nothing, on the other hand, is more exciting or more consoling than to accept the possibility that one may be in error. Dr. Kubie's book, as far as it goes, certainly makes this possibility acceptable. I regard it as a brief, learned, lucid and modest prolegomenon to a lifework which, as it develops, may well prove of inestimable help to us all. And heaven knows we need it.

Memo to Trustee Ruml

MEMO TO A COLLEGE TRUSTEE. A Report on Financial and Structural Problems of the Liberal College. By Beardsley Ruml. McGraw Hill Book Co. 94 pp. $2.95.

Alexander Laing

SWATHED in a crackling thundercloud, a senior loomed up in my office to demand an explanation of his grade.

"What's the complaint?" I asked, wishing I could recollect ever having seen him before, or the research paper with which he was menacing me.

"I thought I was right on top of this one, sir. I beat my brains to shreds on it, for two solid weeks. And what do I get? A lousy hook!"

(*Hook*, in the academic jargon, meant a C minus.)

We went through his paper together, paragraph by paragraph: one, as it proved, graded in the final free evening of Christmas vacation. (*Free* evening. *Vacation.* More academic jargon, meaning something else.) As usual, I had decorated the margins of the first sixty papers too liberally and had had to skimp the last few. When the many criticisms which I had not had time to

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jot down all were spoken, my visitor was silent for a while. Then he swung toward me in a different kind of anger.

"Three and a half years," he said, "washing a million dishes, slapping blacktop on the roads in the summer heat, for an education! Why did I have to wait till the middle of my senior year for somebody to take just one hour of his precious time to show me why I'm a C man?"

"The C man's a myth," I admonished him.

"You're looking at a myth, then," he said. "You gave me the right grade, don't worry. Sure, I got some A's in high school, or I wouldn't be here. But in college it's been C plus, C minus, all the way. Why didn't I get this close-up treatment from somebody, before it was too late?"

What could I give him but the truth of the matter, which should be repeated now to an inquiring, imaginative trustee of the college where this took place?

"We haven't enough teachers here to do the job that all of us as individuals would like to do."

BEARDSLEY RUML has made an enduring notch for himself in the wallets of his countrymen as the begetter of a scheme for forcing everybody to buy what nobody wants, ahead of time, on the installment plan. Once more, in *Memo to a College Trustee*, he offers a numerical scheme of ruthless simplicity. He would boost our student-teacher ratio from 10:1, the traditional optimum, to 20:1 — and, in the inevitable shake-up, tear out a clinging network of pedagogical inefficiencies. Few of us would question his catalogue of defects in the liberal college. They are common knowledge among us: the anarchic departmentalism, the delegations of function that pose as devices of democratic choice, the ponderous and wasteful committee system, the coalition voting that protects vested interest by frustrating imaginative change.

Mr. Ruml rightly perceives much that is out of kilter. His remedy is suspect because his analysis is partial. He has consequently missed a principal reason why such absurdities persist. Looking downslope from the peak of the academic pyramid, he seems to perceive a process which can be at the same time lamentably disorganized in its methods and satisfactory in its results. His cure involves the holding of faculties to their present sizes until student enrollments have doubled. From an unchanged tuition rate we shall then get twice our current pay. The work load, under an increasingly efficient organization of the curriculum, will be no larger. While continuing to do a satisfactory job, we shall recover from our wasteful ways of doing it. Inferentially, a decent salary level will lure back our renegades, who have left us to develop more bang for a buck, or to advise Detroit (what Detroit has ached to hear) that you and I are fin-loving Rover Boys. What luck for our students if we could persuade these people to return!

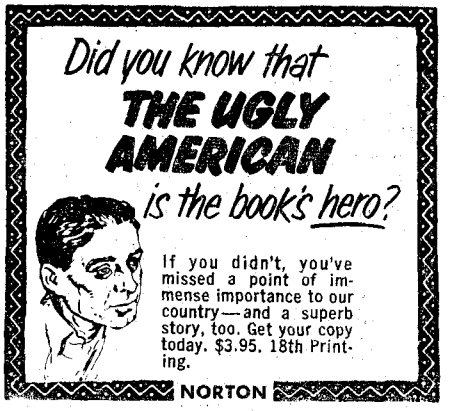
But Mr. Ruml's view from the peak is too sanguine: most liberal arts colleges are not merely inefficient, they also are seriously unsatisfactory in their accomplishment. Recollection of my non-mythical C man festers like a thorn in my conscience as the symbol of our failure. In the inward view from a lower step on the academic pyramid it seems plain that our faults of organization, which certainly ought to disturb a concerned trustee, result from the undermanning of our faculties. We spend far too much time in committee, seeking more effective ways of using too few teachers. A new or refurbished course may emerge. For a year or two the dedicated do well in it, until the load proves too great for them.

Periodic shake-ups of the entire curriculum make way for exciting new experiments. But for these we need scholars with special training or novel talents. The keepers of the purse sadly point out that nothing of this sort was provided for in the budget. The shaken pieces settle back into a superficially altered pattern, within which the same teachers soon are purveying much the same material in the ways which they regard as time-tested. Each man's ancient problem is still with him: Shall I direct my limited energies toward a few rewarding students, or toward those who are most in need of my help? How much do I owe the many who seem content to wangle a degree with the least effort?

THE C MAN of my anecdote was not typical. He cared enough about his education to speak up at last, too late for a real rescue. But many more, if we could reach them in time, might be saved before they slip into the sad rut of middling accomplishment. This is where we fail. Shorthanded, we have been driven all along to the very remedy Mr. Ruml now prescribes: the creeping compromises such as the large introductory course, which presents the elements of a discipline too slowly for those who are to major in it, yet fast enough to develop an abiding distaste for the subject in as many more. This endemic expedient conserves instructors' time for the intimate courses of the major. Mr. Ruml's own college offers both regular and intensive versions of a few introductory courses, an efficient procedure. Two such, both of excellent repute, have now been recombined. The given reasons are complex, but a saving in instructor-hours is a factor.

Why then are teachers resisting the Ruml formula, which promises more small course sections than ever? Precisely because it is played out already. It holds no future hope within a mixed economy of ideas and methods, which is the significant mark of the liberal college. We could rid ourselves of many inefficient compromises with the aid of a few more teachers.

A humane third of this small book, entitled "Achievement of the Possible," was written by the late Donald H. Morrison. Much of it reads like a warning against the proposals in which it is imbedded. Provost Morrison notes that if a teacher "has been brought in to help with a sectioned course, he has a strong case for at least one course of his own simply to relieve the monotony." If teachers find such compromise courses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monotonous, are we to blame the students for being bored by them?

Where does this leave us? With an uneasy inference that one trustee has not informed himself concerning the essence of the teaching process in a liberal setting. He wishes to preserve the liberal college, but this singular phenomenon merits preservation, in an over-organized culture, only if it continues to be singularly itself: a place where men and women of integrity, as well as of talent and learning, can seek and impart—not the other fellow's truth—but each his own truth. Perhaps this essentially anarchistic enterprise can exist only in a state of advanced inefficiency. This may be the exact cost, even if there is no place for such accounting on a balance sheet.

As he nurses his main idea around the cautionary remarks of Provost Morrison, Mr. Ruml emphasizes two significant points: first, that the ultimate decisions do and must lie with the trustees; second, that there is no other way in sight of raising the money. The board of which Mr. Ruml is an ebullient member has recently conducted a successful capital funds campaign. Eighteen per cent of the proceeds was earmarked in advance for faculty compensation. A comparable campaign, at an institution no better off for buildings, has been undertaken entirely for faculty compensation.

'They Also Serve Who Only Lie in Wait'

Lloyd Zimpel

MANY POETS reach all of the audience they are capable of handling in editions of, say 200 copies. These are the wild but genuinely talented artists (thousands of amateurs are hereby excluded) whose message, style, wit, vigor or lack of it, intelligence or lack of it, hamper communication with all but a few fellow poets and the occasional critic with a reddened but friendly ear to the underground. From such small beginnings is the word, if it is worthy, spread. Collections from these poets are wholly unlikely to interest publishing houses of any business persuasion. It falls to the fiercely devoted small one-man presses in unlikely corners of the country to bring such work attractively to print. These obscure little operations were never so plentiful as they are now — probably because many of the most significant little magazines and quarterlies — traditional outlet for the yeasty, half-baked and wildly-talented — are regrouping around writers of fashion, both academic and beat. The unpopular poet has recourse only to the small press where, depending on his faith in himself or lack of ability to interest a kindly editor, he can always pay for the printing of the work himself — although there are almost enough small presses to insure that the interesting poet's work will be printed, but probably not read, with no more cost to him than the anguish of creation.

One of a dozen of the most honorable such one-man publishing houses was the just-demised Jargon Press in Highlands, North Carolina. By presenting their work in superb editions, publisher Jonathan Williams warmly supported some important poets—Robert Creeley, Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, Irving Layton. Like many other small press owners, Williams is a fine poet and published his own work. In addition he backed the influential *Black Mountain Review*. Although the operation finally failed, it did so gallantly and for the best of small press reasons—no public support, even though Williams berated and implored on all sides with uncommon fervor.

UNDER intelligent and long-suffering editorship, Jargon was one of the best small presses: one of the biggest is Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Books of San Francisco, whose success with beat poets, and now with a book of recipes, threatens to squeeze it out of the literary small-press category. For we can best recognize a small press by the fact that, while its owner may gamble his unemployment check on breaking even, he cannot with a pure heart dream of profits. When, as happens very occasionally, new work for limited audiences brings cash returns, the venture at once becomes basically commercial and curious desiderata begin influencing editorial choices. Still other small presses, less known but passionately serving the worthy writer all the same, are Inferno Press in San Francisco, Hennypenny Press in Los Angeles, Motive Press in Taos, Olivant in Miami—all headed by poets.

One of the latest and most active to join the field is Hearse Press in Eureka, California, an off-shoot of a brazen and frequently outlandish two-year-old quarterly magazine uncompromisingly

LLOYD ZIMPEL has contributed to the Chicago Review, *the* Northwest Review *and other critical journals. He lives in San Francisco.*

The Anaesthetic

My eyes are shut. A weak glare from the sky
Throbs in the bare black tree. I cannot feel
My clothes, my skin, but I am warm.

If it is morning, I should be moving on.
If nightfall, should be coming to somewhere soon.
Snow flaking around my face appears

Some distance off. . . . It is a blizzard now,
Obscures the trees and stones. White gyres expand
Before each other, then fan out:

A steady falling screen. It is as though
I and the distance have run arm in arm
For a long time; now, it is good

To simply stand in snow, gasping, occurring,
Have reached a place where I can begin to plan.
At once, before me, a window blurts

Its beam in blinding invitation. A dog
Barks at my side. I snap my head, I see
It wag its tail. A lane—the other

Side—so near—I almost stand upon it,
A group in high spirits, approaching. Behind,
The forest from which I must have fled

Lies deep, but not unkind. The snow falls slowly.
Tired, I seek a drift. One branch is trembling.
Too black for me to ignore its whiteness.

DAVID GALLER

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called *Hearse: A Vehicle Used to Convey the Dead.* In the eighteen months since its inception, the press has brought out five "chap-books": *Arrows of Longing,* Carl Larsen; *The Papers of Professor Bold,* Gil Orlovitz; *A Legionere* (sic), and *The Constipated Owl,* Mason Jordon Mason; and *A Darkness in the Earth,* Alden A. Nowlan. Each is a sixteen or twenty-four-page offset or letterpress booklet, decently printed in editions up to 500; three bear excellent cover illustrations by Ben Tibbs. Their price tags of 50c to $1 are largely a formality, since a good part of each edition is simply given away to sympathetic people who the publisher hopes have influence. (*Arrows of Longing* was advertised some months after publication as having sold only seven copies.) As with most small presses, printing costs are absorbed by the publisher, but Hearse's E. V. Griffith has had the great fortune of uncovering a small band of individuals—mostly other poets—whose contributions get them "patron" listing on a front page in the booklet they choose to sponsor.

Such lists furnish quaint evidence—besides their mere existence—of one small-press characteristic never found in a sober-sides commercial venture. This is the puckish, screwball humor with which the items are edited: in the list of patrons for three of these five booklets appear a "Jacques Strapp" and a "Jasmie Dadi"—two names surely not found in any city directory. Such willingness to amuse, or insult, the reader—along with the recognizably real patrons and the author as well—is a sport most money-making publishers would never permit themselves. However, it fits Hearse, for it is a way of disclaiming any high purpose, and helps the press establish its own terms.

FROM the outset Hearse Press has regularly half parodied the literary underground from which its readers and writers come. Whatever aims it may presently have (because a measure of success—by small-press standards—has possibly imposed greater self-consciousness in the editing), the press began with no more hope or plan for survival than its name suggests. Attitudes of tongue-in-check cynicism and a kind of jovial perversity give the project the air of *Mad* magazine become sourly intellectual. Except for an apparent taste for bawdiness, the press—and the magazine particularly—seems to have few guiding standards whether aesthetic or commercial, little respect for tradition, no desire to align itself with a school or movement. In this it is quite unlike so many small presses which ride an unwise editorial policy straight to destruction.

The closest Hearse comes to a continuing policy is its concern with the vague cultural rebellion that has become rather unexcitingly familiar in the pages of the little magazines. Of the five Hearse titles so far—and several more have already been announced—all are pitched to the shrill note that signals a cry from the underground against the phony, the righteous, the pretentious, the foolish, the dreary, the ugly—all the problems that confront man on mental, moral, political, social and physical levels. . . . With scarcely a pause for breath.

Of the four poets here, all cry out earnestly enough, but with considerable variation in effect. Some of the work of Larsen and Nowlan reveals too much study in the stylized verse of protest—Larsen in the artlessness of the flat statement; and Nowlan in the hot rhythms of familiar emotions. Gil Orlovitz's wit, and the attenuated, surreal half-images of Mason give the poetry of these two special interest; for them the poem exists more *as poem* and less as a construction from which to blurt obvious statements of fact. At the same time, a disciplined reader may put down *The Papers of Professor Bold* feeling that the poet is all too smashingly clever and that he, the reader, has been rather cunningly used. Along with Mason, Orlovitz shows ribald preoccupations; ingeniously he turns his wicked puns, while Mason's broody sense of tragedy leaks out in dead-pan humor that underscores reality's most obscene side. All four poets fondle the experience of the poem with, generally, heavy-handed irony that furnishes a frame of poetic meaning to their bloody protests and incisive accusations. All four stand about half way between scatter-brained nihilism and insensitive organization. Their protest is spread so broadly as to be thin in any one spot. But the important point is that they *care.* "Don't suck me/ into that lonesome/ life," says Mason; and Orlovitz: "They also serve who only lie in wait."

In short, perhaps the similarity of the poets Hearse has supposed is that they share one of the prevailing moods (of which so many are available). This particular one belongs to the undecided, the uncomfortable group of younger men not so far removed as to be beat, yet not so optimistic as to write letters to editors. They are all half-engaged,

Sunbright on a City Way

Sometimes I have recognized
The bright aloneness of a man.

He stands sunbright on a city way;
He asks me, quietly,
"What street is this—
Is this Sixth Avenue?
Where will I be
If I go south from here?"

I see him grown—
And lost—
And beautiful
And more familiar to me
Than he knows.

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willing enough to stick their necks out, but only for the rare, decent reason. As an entire group they seek a form of rebellion devious enough to slip past the authorities and officials—and one unfamiliar enough so that it will not be recognized, quickly labeled and at once absorbed—as has happened to the protests of some of their contemporaries.

Whether these poets and their fellows will find the sly new voice they seek is still a question. But if they do, certainly it will be heard first in some tiny collection from an obscure small press.

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FILMS

Robert Hatch

A MAGICIAN may be a shabby fraud and still perform wonders — it is required only that the society on which he operates also be fraudulent. Then love potions distilled of swamp water will release concupiscence, hypnotic passes will uncover rancid truths and the obsessively rational man can be reduced to the hysteria his heart craves by disembodied hands and shattered mirrors. In a world of fakes, the faker prevails.

That is the sour theme of Ingmar Bergman's *The Magician*. In the time, approximately, of "Murders in the Rue Morgue," Dr. Vogler, necromancer and mesmerist, is traveling the Scandinavian provinces with his wife (disguised as a youth); his grandmother, a witch; his Micawber-like business manager and a fresh-faced young coachman. Dr. Vogler wears a priest-of-darkness make up over a bleak Northern face somewhat recalling the face of T. E. Lawrence (the part is played by Max von Sydow, who was the crusader in *The Seventh Seal*). The unsavory reputation of the troupe precedes it and when the wayfarers reach a certain city they are haled to the house of a local nobleman, there to be questioned and tested by the chief of police and the principal doctor, a disciple, one judges, of Diderot. The troupe is conciliatory, ineptly harmless; its interrogators are scornful. But the presence in the great house of the mere semblance of superior powers shatters the polite order of the establishment from master's chambers to scullery. At the close, Dr. Vogler and his acolytes are summoned to perform before the king — with what consequences the audience is free to imagine for itself.

Anyone who has seen Mr. Bergman's other films (*The Seventh Seal, Wild Strawberries*) will recognize this as cloth cut precisely to his taste—not surprising, since he cut it. It was measured too precisely, perhaps, for it plays not only into his talents but into his weaknesses as well. Bergman relishes atmosphere for its own sake — poisonous mists rolling through demented forests, portentous starting of the eyeballs, symbolism that sometimes seems more an escape hatch than a guide to deeper vision (it is hard to pin a man's meaning down when he resorts to Delphic utterances). Bergman does not readily abstain from Gothic flimflam and he teeters on the edge of morbid cliché. Yet he is really possessed of a caustic, impatient mind, and his approach to human situations, though humane, is incisive and corrective.

This crisp mind yearning for opera capes can make Bergman's touch uncertain when he moves into the border area between windy melancholy and acrid satire. The two sides of his coin become blurred, the sentimentality of his characters is not readily separable from his own sighs and one becomes baffled by a polished raconteur who can so unpredictably allow his voice to turn yeasty.

By all usable standards, *The Magician* is a superior film — superior in idea and in execution: if it were not, I would not be thus speculating on it. No one today uses the camera with more individuality or holds the spectator more slave to his will. Bergman is a great artist; also, I suspect, a self-indulgent one. In *The Magician*, I feel, he has been tempted by misty gewgaws to soften his art.

THE THEATRE where it is playing won't let you come in during the last half hour of *Back to the Wall*. I approve of seeing pictures the right way around, but when the management posts that sign you may be sure that you are going to see a machine. This French conundrum is a fair example of jigsaw homocide, a cat-and-mouse revenge tale of ingenuity and implacability that pulls the suspense thread exceedingly tight. I was too much aware that it had been built in reverse from the smashing trick to lose myself in goose flesh, but it is well enough constructed to keep your eyes attentive while your mind roams.

CORRECTION

The statement in Donat O'Donnell's review of *The Diaries of Roger Casement* (September 5) that "a Dublin handwriting expert has since examined the documents and declared the passages to be forgeries" was inserted by the editors on the basis of an Associated Press dispatch. Mr. O'Donnell informs us that this dispatch was incorrect.

Souls Like Chisels

for D. G.

Chisels, to work!
Body is but rock.

Dionysus, Eros —
Free the dæmon!
Break the hymen!
Make the poem!

Souls like chisels!
Earth, Air, Mind, Heart —
Prepare for form!

M. L. ROSENTHAL

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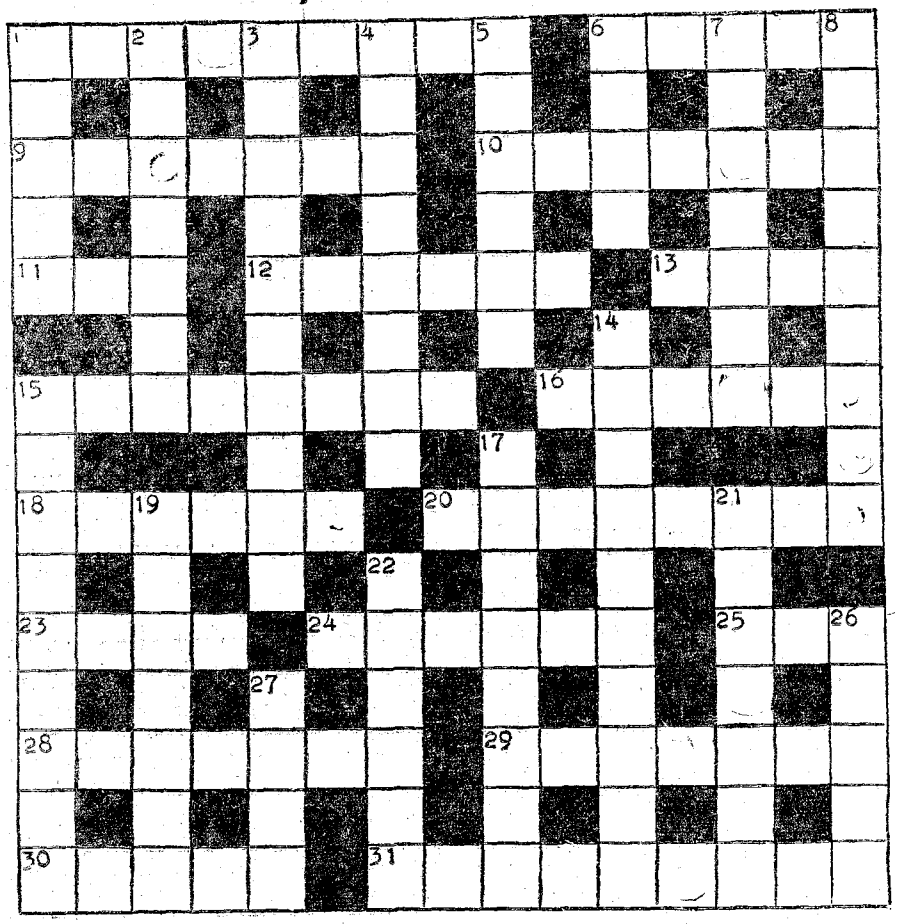
Crossword Puzzle No. 835

By FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS:

1 Orphaned Alabama master, associated with America's cities? (9)
6 and 9 See 11
10 Outlaw ruler in safekeeping? (7)
11, 9, 6 across, 17 and 22 down What comes around midnight? (It might call for aspirin!) (3, 7, 5, 3, 5, 6)
12 Song that suggests a worker's gathering. (6)
13 and 27 Medicine, when it gets old, is spoiled. (8)
15 Powder, but no charge with it. (4-4)
16 It takes a weapon pointed in the wrong direction to get something valuable. (6)
18 Snub, or incite a person secretly. (6)
20 Followed after the fish, if not paid for. (8)
24 Like one in Pisa which didn't quite ring? (6)
25 Swift subject of a tale, however read backwards. (3)
28 It might describe movement of everything, for example, forward or backward. (7)
29 Canal boat? (7)
30 Relieved of such a chore as editing. (5)
31 Tender tea leaves begged for an answer. (9)

DOWN:

1 If one does, the thing given is right inside. (5)
2 The stifling condition of unmelodic music? (7)
3 Where Napoleon claimed victory in the Battle of the Windmill. (6, 4)
4 and 23 Is it recommended for the family for the purpose of procuring the lady's cape? (12)
5 A wild bear is likely to prove dangerous. (6)
6 A near relative of the tuna. (4)
7 Staff officer obviously capable of wrapping things up. (7)
8 Watch, and certain industries might have to be. (9)
14 The dividing of the Incas, under ancestral rule. (10)
15 Form a 14 by returning the ring? (9)
17 See 11 across
19 Hurries around with stern Victorian appearances. (7)
21 How carriages proverbially waited? (8)
26 The stigma of trade? (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 834

ACROSS: 1, 6 and 27 across The Turn of the Screw; 5 Flounce; 9 Tresses; 10 Integer; 11 Least; 12 and 24 Impasses; 14 Yule log; 16 Drastic; 18 Turkeys; 21 and 13 Blessed event; 26 Obi; 28 Stirrup; 29 Gaining; 31 Presser. DOWN: 1 Totally; 2 Eyeball; 3 Upset; 4 Nesting; 5 Flipped; 7 Neglect; 8 Erratic; 15 Lee; 17 Ace; 18 Transit; 19 Respite; 20 Stopper; 21 and 30 Bring up the rear; 22 Straits; 23 Dowager; 25 Serge; 27 Shine.

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